



## GOSSIP OF THE DRAMA FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW

"JULIUS CAESAR" is now adjudged one of the most notable of Shakespeare's plays. It has of late received the most serious attention of the greatest actors of our stage. It is the delight of the electionist. It is a text book study in our schools. In consequence it is very possibly the most familiar classic drama in all the range of dramatic compositions brought to the attention of the electionist, the student, the actor, and the commentator.

Yet for about fifteen years it has been given but one American production, that of Louis James and Frederick Warde. Notwithstanding that the "Quarrel of Brutus and Cassius" has graced every lyceum program in every public school, that electionists have ranted their way impetuously and grandiloquently through half its speeches, only this one serious production bridges the interval between the retirement of Booth and the performance which Washingtonians are to view tomorrow night at the National. Statisticians who direct their attention particularly to affairs of the drama hold that a new generation of theater patrons arrives with each decade. The inference, then, is obvious—that present day playgoers know Julius Caesar through that one presentation alone.

In England, however, "Julius Caesar" has been continuously and capably presented. It is always a feature of the repertoire of the two patented theaters royal, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. There actors of marked ability appear at reasonable intervals as Brutus, Cassius, and Anthony, the play is presented with acceptable investiture, and the drama is given a moderately adequate interpretation. There have been, also, occasional performances of the play in what are called "the provinces." But neither in England nor in the United States has there been given since the retirement of Edwin Booth any enactment of this favored and artistic work which was distinctive either for the acting or the scenic equipment.

This reflection moves the mind to a retrospect of the notable performances of this play. Some of them have been amusing and curious. A few have been distinguished artistically. But none, or practically none, has been sufficiently well mounted to obtain comment.

A Latin play on the death of Caesar was acted at Christ Church, Oxford, so early as 1582, as appears from Peck's "Collection of Divers Curious Historical Pieces." William Alexander, afterward Earl of Sterling, wrote a tragedy on the story and gave it the title of "Julius Caesar." "It may be presumed," says Malone, "that Shakespeare's play was posterior to his; for Lord Sterling, when he composed his 'Julius Caesar,' was a very young author and would hardly have ventured into that circle within which the most eminent dramatic author-writer of England had already walked. The death of Caesar, which is not exhibited, but related to the audience, forms the catastrophe of the piece. In many parallel passages

the two authors are almost identical, perhaps, have been derived from the same source." This play, however, was probably composed about 1607, but was not published until 1633. Stationer's records show that it was printed in 1633. It is a worthy play, but it is not the play which we know as "Julius Caesar."

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RICHARD MANSFIELD AS BRUTUS IN "JULIUS CAESAR."



was first performed on this side of the Atlantic Ocean March 14, 1794, at the John Street Theater, New York. On the program it was denoted "a tragedy written by Shakespeare, called 'Julius Caesar,' with the death of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, and the remarkable orations of Brutus and Anthony over the body of Caesar." The Brutus was Mr. Hallen, a son of the Hallen who was the first English actor who came to America. Fine, indeed, must have been the Brutus of Mr. Conway, the elder of the two who have graced our stage, William Augustus Conway by name, seen at the Chatham Theater in 1826. According to contemporaneous record, this able but unfortunate actor must have possessed a singularly apt disposition for the role.

The first of the celebrated but unfortunately now extinct line of Hamblins was Brutus to the favored playgoers of the next succeeding years. The old Bowers Theater was the scene of his triumphs, and Forrest and Cooper were enrolled in his admirable support. Later on Edwin Forrest made Shakespeare's Brutus one of his admired characters. Wallace is recorded as the next great Brutus. He headed a revival at the Park Theater, New York, November 13, 1843.

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ing, self-subdued mind of Brutus which I tried to make manifest before them."

John McCullough sometimes played Brutus, but in America the next great exponent of the noble role was Edwin Booth. It was one of his favorite roles, and his public loved him in it. One of his first appearances in this character was in the Winter Garden, New York, in June, 1853, on an occasion of singular interest. The three leading roles were played by the three brothers—Edwin Booth as Brutus, Junius Brutus Booth as Cassius, and John Wilkes Booth as Mark Anthony. Edwin Booth played Brutus continuously from December 25 to March 16 in the winter of 1871-72 at Booth's Theater. Later on the play was the chief feature of the tours of the Booth-Barrett combination.

The next great American actor to play Brutus was E. L. Davenport. He had seen the zenith of his career and had relapsed into retirement, when, in December of 1875, he was brought forward as Brutus in a revival of "Julius Caesar" at Booth's Theater. He played the role 101 consecutive times in New York, and then repeated it exclusively on a triumphant tour. How well he loved the noble-hearted Brutus and the superb quality of this great play may be gathered from his reply when, after his tour, he was asked if he was weary of the role:

"No; I never enjoyed Brutus more, nor

it was not the tragedy nor yet the actors who made the impression, but the supernumeraries. "The Dramatic Mirror" said of this production:

"In the Senate scene the supers formed a dense background for the deed of the arch-conspirators. The assassination was effectively managed and the business of the citizens, senators, and others was singularly realistic. In the forum scene, however, the mob fairly eclipsed all mobs that have been seen on the American stage. They played the scene so well, indeed, that Anthony and the corpse of Caesar sank into insignificance. It was a peculiar and well-nigh unprecedented exhibition—the stars actually became subsidiary while the supers became the stars. In itself the acting of these eager, shouting, vacillating citizens of Caesar's Rome was praiseworthy in the highest degree; but it was all bad art—all the reversal of the true relations of the dominant and subordinate. It pleased the spectators that expected just such a distortion and came ready to cheer it, but it disturbed rudely the thoughtful spectator's sense of proportion and of artistic propriety."

Warde and James appeared several years later, beginning a long tour with a first production in Washington. The premiere occurred in August on a very warm night, and was a marked success. Both Warde and James are excellent actors, within a somewhat limited sphere, and they appeared to great advantage as Anthony and Brutus. Their production was unfortunately hampered, however, by rather an inadequate support, only one other role being well acted—that of Cassius by Charles D. Hermann.

This is a long list, although only an outline of the representations of "Caesar" on the stage. But none of these representations deserved pre-eminence pictorially. Nearly all were adequately mounted; there was even some objection to anything more than the most necessary equipment; but Rome, as it existed in the day of the great Caesar has never, in the course of the whole history of this great tragedy, been sufficiently represented.

An actor secure in the public favor and capable of enacting a great role had thus at the outset of the current season a great opportunity. A noble tragedy, as familiar as any other work in English, imbued with the genius of the greatest figure in the history of English literature, reflective of the most splendid age in the history of the world's greatest empire, lay neglected. To this opportunity, with all its responsibilities, the foremost actor on the American stage has arisen. By general consent he has given to this play the most beautiful and accurate equipment it has ever received; he has organized a company as capable, probably, as can now be obtained without the co-operation of many actors hardly less eminent than himself; he has himself undertaken the chief role and has interpreted it in such manner as to lend to it added force, and infuse into it a hitherto unknown humanity. Such a production as this is a notable triumph for actor and manager. But in view of the strange history of this play it is much more to be noted as a great opportunity for students of the drama and intelligent patrons of the theater.

A. L. A.

## Past and Future.

The virtue of true art and the power of worthy personality manifested themselves at the National last week.

The engagement of Mr. Willard and his company presented the actor in many different characters. There was one new play. The other offerings were not only not new but entirely familiar. So it is that the continued and even patronage extended the Willard company bespeaks a surety of position and established favor which are mightily reassuring.

Few theatergoers understand why favorite actors seek for a new play every year. The reason is this—that, no matter what the interest in familiar enactments, the box office receipts fall far short of those attained with a new drama and a new role. By all the laws

of the theater, Mr. Willard's new play should thus eclipse in receipts all his old plays. But it does not. On the contrary, the one poor audience of the week, that of the Wednesday matinee, was assembled by "The Optimist."

Enough has been said of Mr. Willard's acting in these columns already. It is difficult to avoid repeating, however, the comment on his notable versatility. This quality may be inherent, as many students of the stage contend; but it is far more likely merely a seal of this actor's complete preparation for his work.

Kellar provided the theatrical entree expected from him always. "Magic" is



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not drama. It has not properly any place on the stage. But Mr. Kellar's performances are so clever, his monologue is so entertaining, and his performance so acceptable a variant from the usual theatrical offering, that his annual visit is gladly noted.

Chase's provided an entertainment not ordinarily regarded as theatrical. "The Pike Company" confirmed last year's good impression with "The Climbers," one of the best plays Mr. Fitch has produced.

Nellie McHenry in "Miss," the Bijou stock company, and the Rose Hill company completed the week's schedule. Dramatically, it was not particularly strong.

Mr. Mansfield's production of "Julius Caesar" is the most notable theatrical undertaking of the season, and deserves, as no doubt it will receive, the cordial support of every thoughtful patron of the stage. Like his "Henry V." it is a great contribution to the theater of today on the ground of investiture alone. It has, however, further and stronger distinction. The cast is strong, the preparation has been thorough, and Mr. Mansfield has himself given to the role of Brutus an interpretation—if the critics of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore be not all wrong—which conforms closely to that of nearly all the more prominent latter-day commentators. His engagement is almost sure to prove the climax of the local theatrical season.

Miss Lulu Glaser, in "Dolly Varden,"

is very possibly as good a counter attraction as the Columbia could offer. There is no competition between the two playhouses—each will produce so good a performance as to claim support without interfering with the other. "Dolly Varden" is a sweet and comparatively wholesome comic opera. It is supposedly very well performed. It will, therefore, claim on its own merits the support of those whose ears are pleased with light music and risibilities moved by clean comedy.

Chase's reopens with a good bill, headed by Elsie Fay, "The Climbers" is succeeded by "In the Palace of the King." The Academy offers "Hearts Adrift," and elsewhere the bills are characteristic.

National—Richard Mansfield in "Julius Caesar."

All the preparations for the coming of Richard Mansfield and his "Julius Caesar" equipment to the National are about complete. Mansfield brings everything seen or used on the stage, even his own specially made calcium lights. Dressing room accommodations are being prepared for 300 people, and one especially prepared room has been made ready for the costumes of others than principals. One feature of the list of things which had to be made ready, is a block and tackle with a raising capacity of 300 pounds. It is believed that this is to raise a large section of the senate scene, which is a remarkable effect in amphitheater form and must be strong enough to bear the crowd of senators.

Mansfield comes by special train of ten cars. In order to get the quantities of scenery, furniture, crates, armor, and other paraphernalia to the theater at the earliest possible moment, a procession of baggage wagons and scene vans will meet the train and begin work as soon as the baggage cars are switched to their positions.

Attention is called to the fact that the curtain rises punctually at 7:45 o'clock, and this means that the overture will have been played before that time. Everyone is urged to be in his places on time, for though the stage is radiant with light during the first act, the house is dark. The interest in the story begins at once, and not only is Caesar's pageant to the Imperial games one of the earliest features of the play, but Mansfield makes his entrance before the curtain has been up eight minutes.

Though Mansfield appears with effect in the earlier scenes and in Brutus' oration to the rioting mob in the Forum,

effect in England. Probably at no time before or since has the English court been so beautifully and artistically dressed as at this period. The costumes of "Dolly Varden" were designed by Mme. Seldel, of the Metropolitan Opera House, and made by Mme. Freilinger of New York. There are twenty-four musical numbers in "Dolly Varden," which means that more than half of the performance has been contributed by the eminent composer Julian Edwards. Most of this music is of the light opera character.

Chase's—Elsie Fay and Polite Vaudeville.

Elsie Fay, who has just returned from London, where she won much success, will head the bill at Chase's this week.

It was here, in "The Girl from Up There," at the National Theater, that Miss Fay blossomed in a night, from obscurity into the full glare of the calcium of public interest, and her performance aroused widespread comment. She will reintroduce herself as "The Belle of Avenue A," so-called from the song she sang into fame. The second feature of the bill will be John T. Thorne and Miss Grace Carleton, the well-known farcical purveyors, in the enigmatical farce, "The Lady in the Cab." The famous Four Lukens will re-enforce the program with what is said to be the strongest aerial casting performance ever imported from Europe, and one in which the hazard of life and limb is so apparent as to excite genuine apprehensions of danger. Wilfred Clarke, the youngest son of the late comedian, John Sleeper Clarke, will appear in a comedy, "In the Biograph." Klein, Ott Brothers, and Nickerson, musical artists, will offer a contribution calling for performances upon a large number of quaint and melodious instruments. Agnes Mahr, the dashing Parisian premiere danseuse, Ada Arnoldson, the "Swedish nightingale," and the vitagraph motion pictures complete the bill.

Lafayette—Pike Stock Company in "In the Palace of the King."

The Pike Theater Stock Company will begin the second week of its stay at the Lafayette Opera House, presenting for the first time at popular prices F. Marion Crawford's romantic play, "In the Palace of the King." This play has been offered here only once before, when Viola Allen's company presented it at high prices. The Pike company has secured from Miss Allen's managers the original costumes and scenery used during the run of the play in New York, and will present the players in this environment. The Pike company has made an unqualified hit in Washington, and the second week will doubtless see a continuation of the business done this week by "The Climbers." A special Thursday matinee, in addition to the regular Wednesday and Saturday afternoon performances, is announced.

"In the Palace of the King" is one of the strongest of recent romantic dramas, and its first introduction at popular prices should be of interest to those who did not see the play when it was presented here by Miss Allen. The members of the company have already established themselves in favor and the coming production will show them in new roles.

Academy—"McFadden's Row of Flats."

"McFadden's Row of Flats" will come to the Academy tomorrow night for a week's stay. The farce has been reconstructed and recast with a view to giving the public the best comedy of the kind ever presented on similar lines. It must not be forgotten that the manager has given time and attention to the progression of farce comedy, with a view of making it above all things an entertainment for the whole great theater-going public. He long ago realized that while certain "lines of business" belong to certain kinds of pieces, farce comedy embraced them all. With such a store to draw from, he was not slow to take advantage, and with liberality and judgment created "McFadden's Row of Flats," suggested by a bright artist, and has built upon this suggestion until he has reared a structure this year which is said to be funnier, stronger, brighter, more laugh provoking than ever. A most amusing story is told by Arthur Whitelaw, Miss Mae Donohue, Miss Mae Phelps, and their colleagues, while the incidents and episodes of the three acts, including specialties, provide continual entertainment.

Empire—Bijou Stock Company.

Manager Schlesinger announces that the performance to be given at the Empire Theater this week will be the best beyond any doubt that has been seen on the Empire stage this season. Mr. Schlesinger has engaged an especially strong olio, which will precede the elaborate burlesque to be put on by the stock company.

The chief feature of the olio will be Avery and Hart, two colored comedians.

The burlesque to be presented by the stock company is entitled "A Midnight Social," and will require the services of a very large company. A number of newcomers will be seen in the ranks of the stock, among them Ernie Phelps, Dora Cullen, Clara Higgins, and May Escher, while all the old favorites, including Flo Jansen, the Howard Sisters, Aggie Behler, and Lida Dexter, will remain.

Lyceum—"The Trans-Atlantic Burlesquers."

"The Trans-Atlantic Burlesquers" promise on their appearance in Washington, at Kerner's Lyceum, to afford the patrons of this house an entertainment in which all the essential features of burlesque abound, though marked by several departures calculated to prove an agreeable surprise. However new the attraction may be to Washington, it is the second season of the company,